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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 000564

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ETTC](#) [PARM](#) [PHUM](#) [IZ](#) [SA](#) [SR](#) [YM](#) [DEMARCHE](#) [COUNTER TERRORISM](#)

SUBJECT: SALEH SAYS FROM NOW ON NO MORE WEAPONS DEALS USING
ARMS BROKERS

REF: STATE 39726

Classified By: Ambassador Thomas C. Krajewski for reasons 1.4 b and d.

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request for NEA/ARPI. See para. 12.

[1](#)2. (S) Summary. Ambassador delivered reftel demarche to President Saleh on March 10. In a classic Saleh move to put his interlocutors on the defensive, the Yemeni President opened with a theatrical tirade on the latest Human Rights Report and U.S. hegemony and double standards in the region. Starting with an offensive that the U.S. cannot stop legitimate arms sales to Yemen, Saleh changed his tone in mid-meeting. He conceded that the ROYG had had a fifty-fifty deal with arms merchants before, but that he was ending this practice. Having first said that the shipment of 10,000 M92s was already on its way, upon hearing that we had stopped it, Saleh switched gears, insisting he had issued an order to stop it himself. Saleh ended with a promise, that from now on it would be "official policy" that only the MOD may buy weapon on behalf of Yemen. End Summary.

[1](#)3. (S) Ambassador, DCM and PolEcon Chief (notetaker) met with President Saleh on March 10 to deliver reftel demarche on the cancellation of Yemen's purchase of 10,000 M92 automatic rifles from SaM. In an attempt to preempt this unpleasant message, Saleh, who had been given a heads-up regarding its content, jumped in first. "You don't like our Serbian deal and we don't like your human rights report." Saleh complained that the U.S. hammers Yemen on its human rights record, while demanding extra judicial treatment for Yemeni detainees like Hadi Dulqum, and Jaber al-Banna.

[1](#)4. (S) Saleh announced that on March 9, due to criticisms of Yemen's human rights practices from the Department of State, Congress, and international and local NGOs, he decided to refer the cases of Hadi Dulqum, Jaber al-Banna, and Abu Assem al-Makki to the Attorney General's office for prosecution. "If there is a case, we will try them, if not, they must be released." Ambassador told Saleh he looked forward to discussing human rights issues with him at a future date, but reminded the President that he had come to deliver a very specific and serious message about Yemeni SA/LW purchases. "Yes we buy weapons," Saleh retorted, "we are an independent state and we need them."

Preserving Our Partnership

[1](#)5. (S) Ambassador told Saleh that the U.S. fully recognized Yemen's legitimate defense needs, but that the weapons procured on behalf of the ROYG by third party Yemeni arms dealers far exceed such requirements and are ending up in the hands of terrorists. The USG has grave concerns at the highest levels, continued Ambassador, and urgent action is needed in order to preserve the U.S.-Yemeni partnership.

[1](#)6. (S) Ambassador informed Saleh that the USG has been able to trace two M92s automatic rifles used in the December attack on our Jeddah Consulate to Yemeni MOD procurement orders. Raising the SaM deal for 10,000 M92s, Ambassador told Saleh that Yemen's defense and security forces could not possibly need so many of this specialized weapon -- one highly favored by terrorists for its light weight, small size, and high fire power.

You Can't Do That

[1](#)7. (C) Ambassador reminded Saleh that early last year he had promised to cancel all end-user certificates (EUC) and transfer licensing authority to the MFA. Yet, continued Ambassador, there is no evidence of a change in ROYG policy regarding third-party procurement. In an effort to demonstrate how seriously the U.S. takes this matter, Ambassador told Saleh, the U.S. has asked the Government of Serbia and Montenegro to cancel the sale of 10,000 M92s to Yemen. "You can't do that," retorted Saleh, "the guns are already on their way!"

...Yes, Mr. President, We Can

18. (S) "Mr. President, we can and indeed we have," said Ambassador, adding that along with the U.S., weapons producing Eastern European countries are losing confidence in the legitimacy of Yemeni EUCs. Grasping perhaps for the first time the seriousness of the message, Saleh asked which broker had negotiated the M92 deal with SaM, and agreed that the M92 had a "dangerous shot" favored by terrorists. Saleh suddenly announced, "When I heard of this deal yesterday, I gave the order myself to cancel it!"

...Loud and Clear

19. (S) Switching gears, Saleh conceded that "in the past" he had allowed arms dealers to keep 50 percent of weapons purchases for the ROYG, with the other 50 percent going to the armed forces. "But no more," Saleh declared. Likely concerned which deals might be next stopped, he hastened to inform Ambassador that he personally had just signed a Czech deal for 10,000 pistols and 5,000 'ordinary' AKs for use by his regular forces. "All other deals negotiated by arms dealers are null and void --This is an official decision," Saleh said. Turning to his aide he instructed, "Write that down!"

Tell Prince Nayef to Help Buy Out Our Souks

110. (S) "We do not give arms to terrorists," Saleh said to Ambassador, admitting that arms of all kinds are available in Yemen's weapons souks and "anyone can buy them." Saleh said that arms dealers will sell to anyone, "just like Hadi Dulqum," adding that "if you and the Saudis are so worried" help me clean out the souks. Saleh told us that Saudi Interior Minister Prince Nayef was due in Sanaa on March 11 to sign a new border security fence protocol with Yemen on March 12. He suggested that the U.S. and KSA work together to determine the right sum of money, "perhaps 200-300 million dollars," and agree to "buy out all the arms bazaars in Yemen."

111. (S) Ambassador and DCM both pressed Saleh to tread carefully on Hadi Dulqum -- not an ordinary arms merchant but dealer to AQ -- and give us more time to find a legal solution to his case. While the U.S.-Saudi buyback idea can be explored, Ambassador reiterated to Saleh that the flow of illegal weapons must be shut off for any internal arms control measures to be effective.

112. (S) Comment and Action Request. At his acrobatic best, Saleh started off aggressively but ended up admitting to "mistakes" and promising to make a break with past practices. Prince Nayef's visit may be an occasion to put more pressure on Saleh by promising U.S.-Saudi efforts to help him keep his word. If the SAG is willing, we might jointly press Saleh to follow through on canceling pending arms deals in Eastern Europe, sever his ties with his favorite arms dealers, and accept our help in putting in place a modern inventory control system to help him (and us) account for all weapons purchased by MOD henceforth. A buyback plan, in this context, might be worth the cost. Begin Action Request: Post requests comment on feasibility of asking KSA at such short notice to use Nayef's visit March 11 visit to join us in a trilateral exploration of this idea. End Comment and Action Request.
Krajeski